

Serial No.: 09/679,802
Attorney Docket No.: F-209

Patent

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as shown below.

1. (currently amended) A payment processing system, comprising:
a data center;
a postage metering system located remotely from the data center; and
a control system in operative communication with the data center and the postage metering system, the control system for:
obtaining third party payment data via the postage metering system, the payment data including a payee and a payment amount;
coordinating printing by the postage metering system of an indication of the third party payment on a mailpiece intended for delivery to a mailpiece recipient other than the payee; and
dispatching payment from the data center to the payee for the payment amount in response to the receipt of payment data.

2. (canceled).
3. (currently amended) The payment processing system of claim 2, wherein:
the payment data further includes a future date on which the payment is authorized for dispatch.
4. (original) The payment processing system of claim 3, wherein:
the third party payment indication includes a digital signature of at least a portion of the payment data so that any attempts to tamper with the payment data are detectable.
5. (previously amended) The payment processing system of claim 4, wherein:

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the mailpiece is a business return mailpiece provided by the payee, the business return mailpiece including space to receive the indication of the third party payment.

6. (original) The payment processing system of claim 5, wherein:
the control system is further for:
collecting payments from a plurality of postage metering systems that are directed to the payee before dispatching an aggregated payment to the payee.

7. (original) The payment processing system of claim 1, wherein:
the control system is further for:
collecting payments from a plurality of postage metering systems that are directed to the payee before dispatching an aggregated payment to the payee.

8. (original) The payment processing system of claim 7, wherein:
the payment data further includes a date on which the payment is authorized for dispatch.

9. (currently amended) A method of operating a payment processing system, the method comprising the step(s) of:
locating a postage metering system remotely from a data center;
transmitting payment data via a postage metering system to the data center,
the payment data including a payee and a payment amount;
the payment data further includes a future date on which the payment is authorized for dispatch; and
dispatching payment from the data center to the payee for the payment amount in response to the receipt of payment data and the occurrence of the future date.

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10. (original) The method of claim 9, further comprising the step(s) of:
coordinating printing by the postage metering system of an indication of the
third party payment on a mailpiece intended for delivery to the payee.
11. (canceled).

12. (original) The method of claim 11, further comprising the step(s) of:
generating a digital signature of at least a portion of the payment data and
including the digital signature with the third party payment indication so that any
attempts to tamper with the payment data are detectable.

13. (previously amended) The method of claim 12, further comprising the
step(s) of:

providing a business return mailpiece for use as the mailpiece, the business
return mailpiece including space to receive the indication of the third party payment.

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14. (original) The method of claim 13, further comprising the step(s) of:
collecting payments from a plurality of postage metering systems that are
directed to the payee before dispatching an aggregated payment to the payee.

15. (original) The method of claim 9, further comprising the step(s) of:
collecting payments from a plurality of postage metering systems that are
directed to the payee before dispatching an aggregated payment to the payee.

16. (original) The method of claim 15, wherein:
the payment data further includes a date on which the payment is authorized
for dispatch.

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17. (currently amended) A method of operating a data center, the method comprising the step(s) of:

establishing a transaction session with a postage metering system remotely from the data center;

receiving payment data via the postage metering system, the payment data including a payee and a payment amount;

wherein the payment data further includes a future date on which the payment is authorized for dispatch; and

dispatching payment to the payee for the payment amount in response to the receipt of payment data and the occurrence of the future date.

C 18. (original) The method of claim 17, further comprising the step(s) of:

coordinating printing by the postage metering system of an indication of the third party payment on a mailpiece intended for delivery to the payee.

✓ 19. (canceled).

20. (original) The method of claim 19, further comprising the step(s) of: generating a digital signature of at least a portion of the payment data and including the digital signature with the third party payment indication so that any attempts to tamper with the payment data are detectable.

21. (original) The method of claim 20, further comprising the step(s) of: collecting payments from a plurality of postage metering systems that are directed to the payee before dispatching an aggregated payment to the payee.

22. (original) The method of claim 17, further comprising the step(s) of:

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collecting payments from a plurality of postage metering systems that are directed to the payee before dispatching an aggregated payment to the payee.

C1
23. (original) The method of claim 22, wherein:
the payment data further includes a date on which the payment is authorized for dispatch.

C2
24. (new) The system of claim 1, wherein:
the indication of the third party payment is printed on a plurality of mailpieces intended for delivery to a plurality of mailpiece recipients other than the payee.